

2.3.4 Public Land Management Studies

The vast majority of public lands in the study area are managed by the Arizona State Land Department, Bureau of Land Management, United States Forest Service.

Arizona State Land Department

The Arizona State Land Department manages lands within the State Land Trust until they are sold or leased at auction. The Arizona State Land Department is currently conducting planning activities for two major land areas in or near the study area: Superstition Vistas, and Arroyo Grande.

Superstition Vistas: Superstition Vistas, located on the eastern edge of the greater Phoenix metropolitan area in Apache Junction is a 275-square-mile tract of undeveloped state trust land. It is one of the largest pieces of land under single ownership in any metropolitan area. Available information regarding the Superstition Vistas area indicates that this area could support a population of nearly 900,000 people by the year 2060 (*The Treasure of the Superstitions: Scenarios for the Future of Superstition Vistas — Arizona's Premier State Trust Land in the Southeast Valley*, Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University, April 2006).

Arroyo Grande: Arroyo Grande is the name given to 11,547 acres of state trust land located just outside of the Central Regional Framework Study area in northern Pima County. Arroyo Grande is south of Oracle Junction, on the west side of Oracle Road, and north of Oro Valley. The area is named after Big Wash that passes through the area.

The Arroyo Grande Conceptual Planning Program report was released by the State Land Department in January 2008. The Town of Oro Valley has begun negotiating with the Arizona State Land Department on a potential annexation of this area. The Arroyo Grande Conceptual Plan calls for a target buildout of 16,000 homes and 40,000 people. The Plan states that the land could be zoned to include as many as nearly 38,000 homes and over 90,000 people.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Sonoran Desert National Monument (SDNM) Resource Management Plans: The Sonoran Desert National Monument Resource Management Plan is currently under development. It is being conducted jointly with the Phoenix South Resource Management Plan. The Sonoran Desert National Monument consists of 487,000 acres within the Phoenix South Planning Area.

Two sets of alternatives are presented for the Phoenix South Plan and the SDNM Plan. The alternatives include options involving increased human influence, decreased human influence, no action, and a balance between conservation efforts and recreational opportunities. From these options and the input from the public workshops, a preferred alternative will be developed, one for each management plan. Once a preferred alternative is developed, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be conducted to determine the impact of the proposed plan on its area.

Population centers within the planning areas include the Phoenix metropolitan area, Goodyear, Buckeye, Gila Bend, Ajo, Globe-Miami, Tonopah, Mobile, and Maricopa. The combined planning area for the two proposed management plans covers more than 8.8

million acres. However, these plans are applicable only to BLM-administered public lands, which include approximately 1.42 million surface acres of public lands and 1.7 million acres of federal subsurface mineral estate. The Phoenix South plan area cuts into the northern and western portions of the study area, including Coolidge, Florence, Apache Junction, Superior, Miami and Globe (Figure 2-9). The area includes Superstition Vistas, the area west of Florence and north of Eloy, and the part of Tonto National Forest in the study area. The SDNM plan area is farther east and lies inside the Phoenix South plan area. The SDNM plan area enters the Framework study area northwest of the Tohono O'odham Nation, as the Tabletop Mountain Wilderness Area. The remainder of the SDNM plan area stretches northwest into Maricopa County.

There are three main goals for the Phoenix South plan: to protect environmental and cultural qualities associated with the land; provide outdoor recreation; and recognize the area as a source for minerals, food, timber, and fiber. The goal of the SDNM is to protect and manage natural, geologic, and cultural resources for long-term conservation and to better understand the resources for future knowledge. Currently, the BLM is working on the draft management plan, which will present the preferred alternative and the draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Ironwood Forest National Monument Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement: The Ironwood Forest National Monument covers 129,000 acres, and is located about 25 miles northwest of Tucson. Only a small portion crosses into the Framework study area. The monument enters Pinal County on the Tohono O'odham Nation's eastern boundary, and south of the Santa Cruz River farther east (Figure 2-9). It encompasses several desert mountain ranges including the Silver Bell, Waterman, and Sawtooth ranges, and has an abundance of ironwood trees, one of the highest concentrations in the Sonoran Desert. The monument contains several archaeological districts and a significant system of cultural and historical sites covering a 5,000-year period. The monument also features a wide diversity of vegetation and wildlife.

In May 2007, the public workshops were ended for this project, and work on the proposed management plan and Environmental Impact Statement began. The plan is scheduled to be completed in 2008. The public workshops discussed the various alternatives that were presented in the Draft Resource Management Plan, which presented four management alternatives. The alternatives range from a "no action" option, to three options with more active management techniques. The alternatives all meet the overall goal, which is to manage the lands inside the monument in a manner consistent with its purpose: to protect elements of scientific interest. The final document will present the preferred alternative based on the input from the public workshops.



Regional Framework Study: Central Arizona

PRELIMINARY
DRAFT

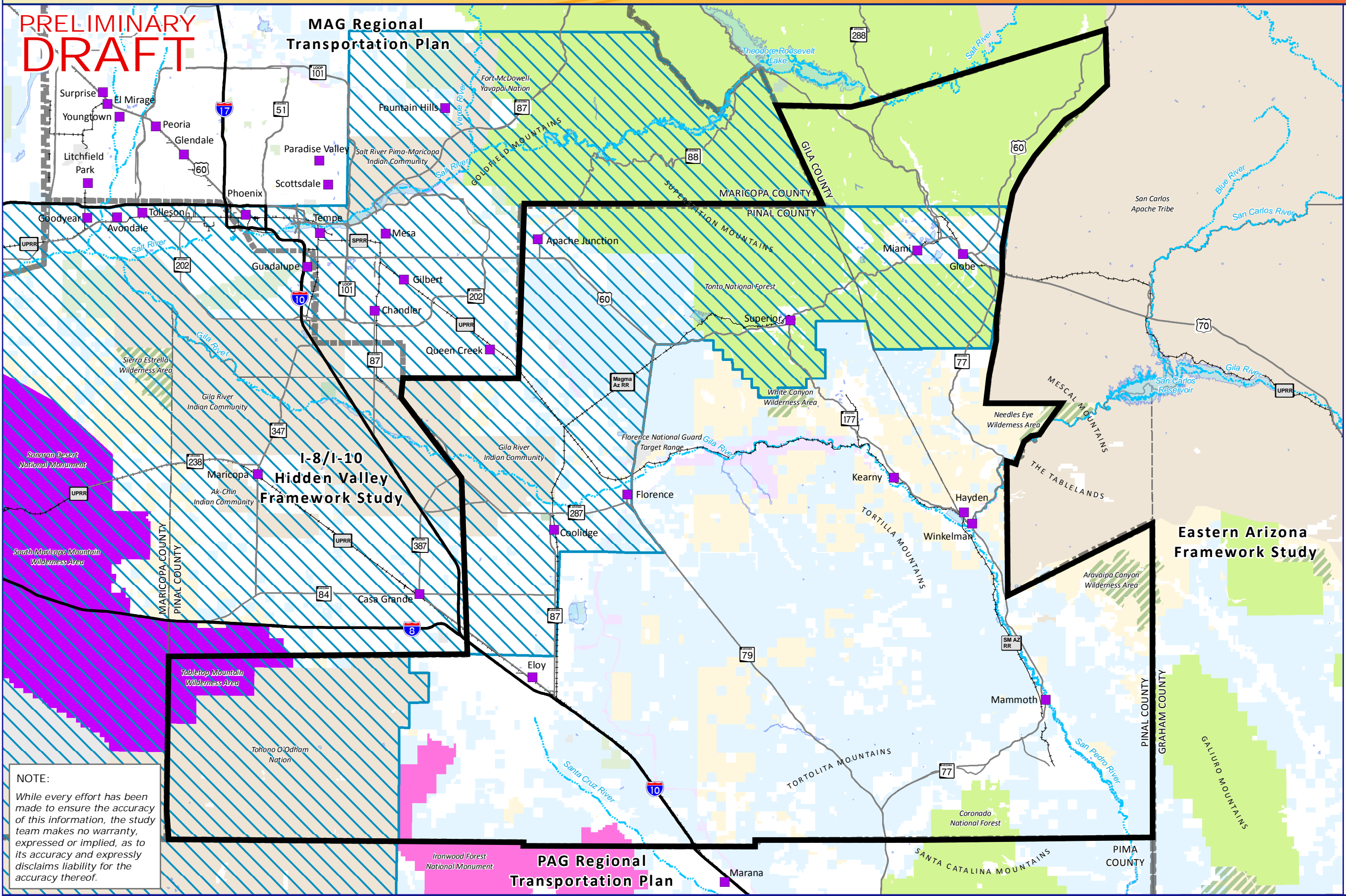


Figure 2-9
Public Land
Management Studies

- Legend
- City/Town
 - Interstate
 - Highway
 - Railroad
 - River
 - Lake
 - County Boundary
 - State Boundary
 - Framework Study Boundary
 - Focus Area Boundary
 - Wilderness Area
- BLM Planning Efforts
- Sonoran Desert National Monument Management Plan*
 - Ironwood Forest National Monument Resource Management and Environmental Impact Study
 - Phoenix South Resource Management Plan Revision*

NOTE:
While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the study team makes no warranty, expressed or implied, as to its accuracy and expressly disclaims liability for the accuracy thereof.

NOTE:
*These plans are being conducted in tandem as one overall project.

0 3.75 7.5 15
Miles

NORTH